



GOLEM

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GOLEM

Jack Spicer

collages by

Fran Herndon

with an afterword by

Kevin Killian

Granary Books New York City

1999



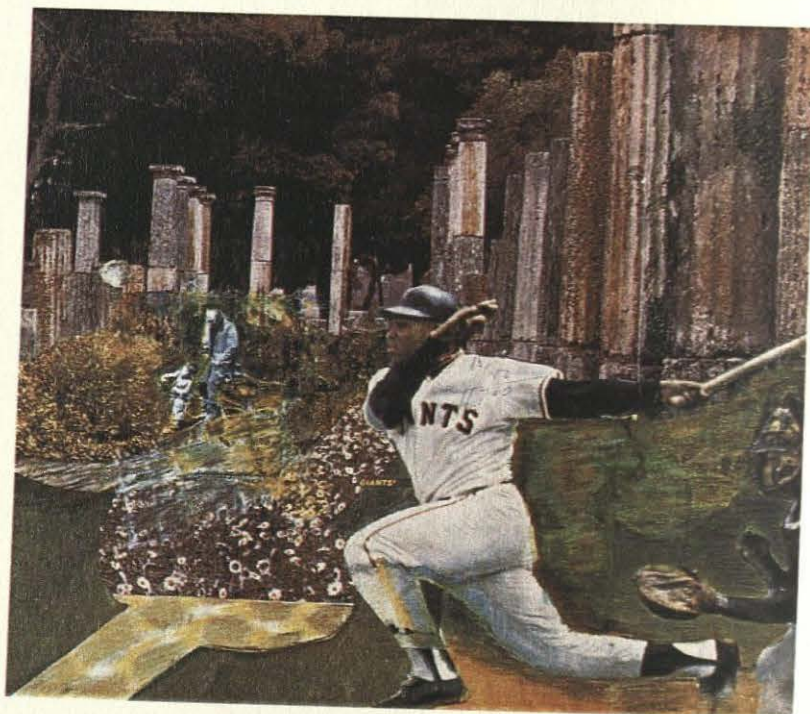
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"October 1, 1962" was published in Manroot Nº 10
and Grand Street Nº 65

"I met my death..." was published in
Grand Street Nº 65



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October 1, 1962

This is an ode to Horace Stoneham and Walter O'Malley.
Rottenness.

Who has driven me away from baseball like a fast car. Say
It isn't true Joe.

This is an ode to John Wieners and Auerhahn Press

Who have driven me away from poetry like a fast car. Say

It isn't true Joe. The fix

Has the same place in junkie-talk or real talk

It is the position

They've got you in.

The Giants will have a National League playoff. Duncan

Will read his poems in Seattle.

Money (I forgot the story but the little boy after it all was
over came up to Shoeless

Joe Jackson) Say it isn't true Joe.

I have seen the best poets and baseball players of our
generation caught in the complete and contemptible
whoredom of capitalist society

Jack Johnson

At last shaded the sun from his eyes

. A fix

You become fixtures like light

Balls. Drug

Habit.

Walter O'Malley, Horace Stoneham, do you suppose
somebody fixed Pindar and the Olympic Games?

Golem, Written the Evening After Yom Kippur

Your life does not count. It is the rules of
the tribe. No

Your life does not count.

Counting it all does not count. It is the rules
of the tribe that your life doesn't count.
Numbering it doesn't count. Madness doesn't
count.

Being mad at the numbers doesn't count.

It is a rule of the tribe (dead as they are)
told over the dead campfires

That it doesn't count.

That your life doesn't count.

Countess Death give me Some life in this

little plain we live in from start to finish

Let me slit their throats and smash their heads on the
Stone.





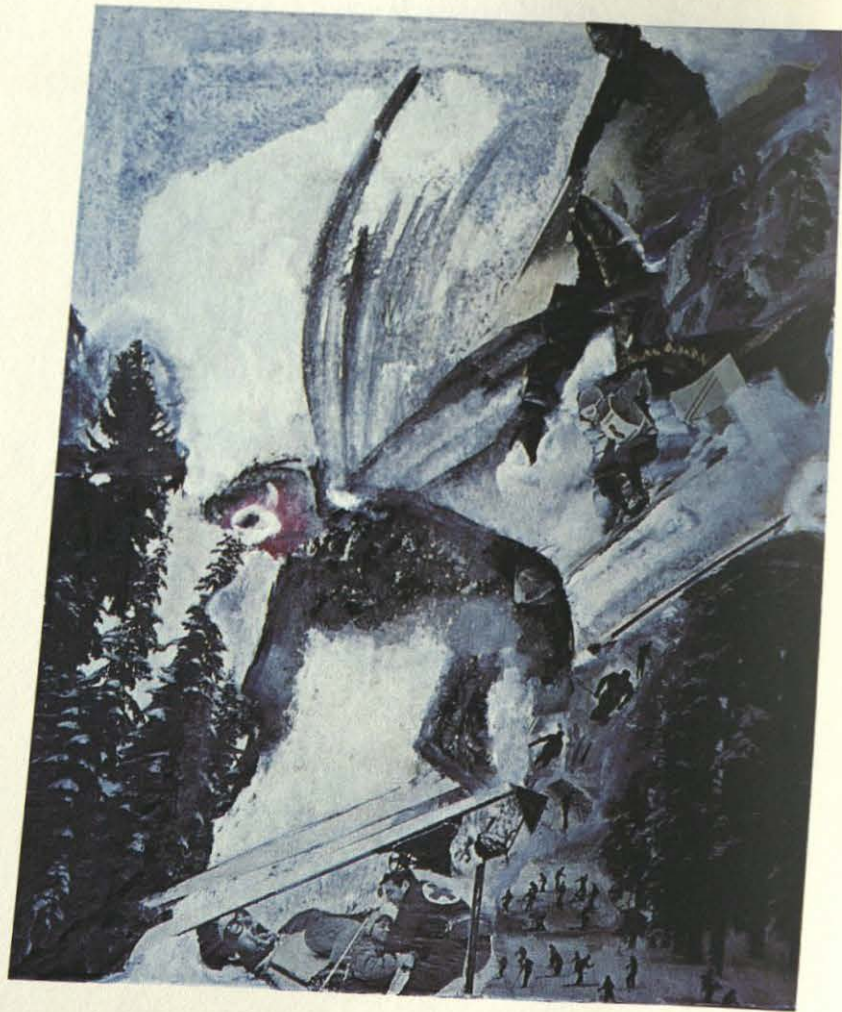
I met my death walking down Grant Avenue at
four miles an hour,
She said, "I am your death."
I asked or I sort of asked, "Are you my doom?"
She didn't know Anglo-Saxon so she coyly
repeated, "Isn't it enough that I am
your death? What else should bother us?"
"Doom," I said. "Doom means judgement
in Anglo-Saxon. The Priestess of the
dead has a face like whey."
Whey is the liquid which is left after they
spoon off the curds which are good with
sugar. The dead do not know judgement.
I am writing this against the Great Mother
that lives in the earth and in mysteries
I am unable to repeat
Heros take their doom. I will not face
My death.



Everything is fixed to a point.
 The death of a poet or a poem is
 fixed to a point. This House, that
 Bank account, this Piece of paper
 on the floor. That Light that shines
 there instead of elsewhere.
 Appealing to the better nature of
 things. Inventing angels.
 Inventing angels. The light that
 that light shone shone there
 instead of elsewhere. Each
 corner of the room fixed in
 an angle to itself.
 The death of a poet or a poem or
 a Piece of paper. Things
 Fix themselves.



Give up. The Delphic oracle was
 fixed by the Persians. Pindar
 Pindar
 Was a publicity man for some
 princes. Traded
 For a couple of wrestlers and cash,
 Anger
 Does not purify.
 The very words I write
 Do not purify. Are fixed in the
 language evolved by thousands
 of generations of these princes—
 used mainly for commerce
 Meretriciousness.
 Wrestler Plato tried to make
 them all into stars. Stars
 are not what they are.
 Coining a phrase our words are
 Big-fake-twenty-dollar-gold-pieces.



6
He died from killing himself.

His public mask was broken
because

He no longer had a public mask.

People retrieved his poems

from wastebaskets. They had

Long hearts.

Oh, what a pain and shame was

his passing

People returned to their

business somewhat saddened.

Afterword

In Europe Fran Herndon met and married the teacher and writer James Herndon, and the couple moved to San Francisco in 1957. Shortly afterwards she met Jack Spicer, Robin Blaser, Robert Duncan and Jess—the brilliant crew that had invented the Berkeley Renaissance ten years earlier, four artists now all working at the height of their poetic powers in a highly charged urban bohemia. Fran Herndon was drawn to the most difficult of them all, Jack Spicer. When he announced one day that she should take up painting, she complied. “He saw in me,” she recalls, “something greater than I saw in myself.” Herndon enrolled her children in day care and herself at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) on Russian Hill in San Francisco. In the summer of 1959 she and Jack Spicer inaugurated a series of joint projects, beginning with their editorial work on the little magazine “J.” Simultaneously they collaborated on “Homage to Creeley,” each working independently and meeting weekly to share results. The synchronicities between Spicer’s “Creeley” poems and Herndon’s lithographs startled and enchanted them both. “He had found—or thought he had found—someone on his wavelength,” Herndon explains. Spicer came to view this collaboration with the same fascination with which he viewed Dr. Rhine’s famous ESP experiments at Duke University, and he published Herndon’s lithographs in the Auerhahn edition of *The Heads of the Town Up to the Aether*, of which “Homage to Creeley” was the first part.

The work in *Golem* is the product of another collaboration between the two artists. In 1962 Herndon’s painterly re-working of pop images cut from the pages of *Sports Illustrated* and other

mass-market magazines was audacious; as the century draws to a close these collages still resonate with a rare power. Kabbalist legend tells us that the golem was constructed—as one might a collage?—from clay, twigs, rags and paper by Rabbi Loew, the Grand Rabbi of Prague, to assuage the suffering of his people in the 16th century. Spicer and Herndon draw on this complex legend to animate their conception of the athlete—and poet—as hero and monster, corpse and avenger. For these artists, the corruption of innocence under the nexus of capital is as simple as, and as confounding as, a “fix.” Spicer’s poems here continue the synchronic view of history he had propounded in *The Holy Grail*—the eerie and sometimes queasy feeling that all events occur at the same time. As in “Homage to Creeley,” Spicer allowed the poetry he wrote while working with Herndon to grow flat, more literal, incantatory, till it approaches the emotionally numb. He depends on her images to bring to the joint work the fantastic and surreal with which he otherwise decorated his verse.

When I was assisting Fran Herndon in preparing her archive for sale in October 1997, we discovered the manuscript of Spicer’s “Golem” poems in a dog-eared manila folder. The first poem in this series saw print—in the “Spicer issue” of *Manroot*—only because Lew Ellingham had copied it onto a brown paper bag after Spicer posted it on the wall of Gino & Carlo’s bar. That it had any successors few guessed or knew. Two others appeared in a recent issue of *Grand Street*, and the series as a whole is first published here. We are grateful to Robin Blaser, the literary executor of Spicer’s estate, for his enthusiastic cooperation in the making of this book.

—Kevin Killian

List of collages

Frontispiece: "Collage for Jimmy Brown"
Facing № 1: "Collage for Willie Mays"
Facing № 2: "Hurtles"
Facing № 3: "The White Angel"
Facing № 4: "King Football"
Facing № 5: "The Devil and Archie Moore"
Facing № 6: "Blackbirds"

Colophon

Golem was designed and printed by Philip Gallo at The Hermetic Press for Granary Books. The type is Template Gothic and VAG Rounded Thin. The paper is Mohawk Letterpress and the images were printed on the Canon 1000 Laser Color Copier. The book was bound at the Campbell-Logan Bindery.

One hundred fifty copies were printed in early 1999; fifty hors commerce; 100 for sale.

Copy № 97

Fran Herndon